

49. (Amended) A method of manufacturing a metallic filter for filtering a fluid, the method comprising:

forming a non-woven metallic mat by placing a first layer of metallic fibers on top of a second layer of metallic fibers, wherein said metallic fibers in said first layer are of a different size than said metallic fibers of said second layer, and said metallic fibers in said first layer and said second layer are of a different size within said first layer and said second layer;

heat treating the non-woven metallic mat having a plurality of metallic fibers so as to form a plurality of sinter bonds among said plurality of metallic fibers;

creating a filter element having said non-woven, metallic mat;

pleating said filter element, said pleating causing at least one of said plurality of sinter bonds to be damaged;

fixedly forming said filter element into a filter assembly having a desired shape; and

repairing said at least one damaged sinter bond by heat treating said filter element after said filter element has been fixedly formed into said filter assembly.

50. (Amended) A method of manufacturing a metallic filter for filtering a fluid, the method comprising:

forming a non-woven metallic mat by placing a first layer of metallic fibers on top of a second layer of metallic fibers, wherein said metallic fibers in said first layer are of a different size than said metallic fibers of said second layer, and said metallic fibers in said first layer and said second layer are of a different size within said first layer and said second layer;

heat treating the non-woven metallic mat having a plurality of metallic fibers so as to form a plurality of sinter bonds among said plurality of metallic fibers; creating a filter element having said non-woven, metallic mat and a first metallic support screen;

pleating said filter element;

fixedly forming said filter element into a filter assembly having a desired shape; and

heat treating said filter element after said filter element has been fixedly formed into said filter assembly so as to bond said filter element to said metallic support screen.